

In the Claims

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Currently Amended) A method for continuously coating cores of gum

material comprising:

(a) continuously introducing cores of gum material ~~20~~ into an inlet end ~~33~~ of a rotating drum member ~~34~~;

(b) transporting the cores of gum material from said inlet end ~~33~~ to an outlet end ~~39~~ of said drum member;

(c) applying a plurality of layers of a coating material ~~50~~ on said cores of gum material inside said drum member until said layers of coating material form an outer shell on said cores about 0.1-0.5 mm in thickness and about 20-40% by weight of the final products;

(d) drying ~~said coating~~ the coated cores of gum material by circulation of heated air ~~52~~ inside said drum member; and

(e) inclining said drum member relative to the horizontal in order to insure that the first cores of gum material introduced into said inlet end of said rotating drum member are substantially the first cores of gum material to be exhausted from said outlet end of said drum member;

wherein smooth, thick shells of the coating material are formed on the cores of gum material comparable to coatings formed by batch-type coating processes but in a faster manner.

7. (Original) The method as recited in claim 6 further comprising the step of applying at least one initial coating of material on the cores of gum material prior to step (a).

8. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 6 wherein at least two drum members ~~34 and 34'~~ are provided and said method further comprises the step of transporting the cores of gum material from a first drum member to a second drum member.

9. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 8 7 further comprising the step of changing the formula of said coating material from the coating material used to form said at least one initial coating of material to the coating material used ~~to introduce into~~ in said drum member.

10. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 8 further comprising the step of providing a first formula of coating material ~~used~~ to introduce into said first drum member and a second and different formula of coating material ~~used~~ to spray into said second drum member.

11. (Currently Amended) A method as recited in claim 8 further comprising the step of ~~providing~~ introducing drying air into said first drum member and said second drum member, the drying air introduced into said first drum member being at a lower temperature than the drying air introduced into said second drum member.

12. (Original) A method as recited in claim 6 wherein said coating materials are applied by spraying in a liquid form.

13. (Currently Amended) A method for continuously coating individual pieces of gum material comprising:

introducing scored sheets of gum material into a mixer;

rotating said mixer to break up the sheets of gum material into individual pieces of gum material;

transferring the individual pieces of gum material into a first rotating drum member having an inlet end and an outlet end;

transporting the individual pieces of gum material from said inlet end to said outlet end;

applying at least a plurality of first coatings of a first material on said individual pieces of gum material in said first rotating drum member;

cooling the individual pieces of gum material in said first rotating drum member with air at a first temperature to prevent the individual pieces of gum material from sticking together;

inclining the first rotating drum member ~~with~~ to a sufficient extent to insure that the first individual pieces of gum material introduced into said inlet end are substantially the first pieces of gum material to be exhausted from the outlet end;

transferring the individual pieces of gum material to a second rotating drum member having an inlet end and an outlet end;

transporting said individual pieces of gum material from the inlet end to the outlet end of said second rotating drum member;

applying ~~at least~~ a plurality of second coatings of a second material on said individual pieces of gum material in said second rotating drum member;

said plurality of first coatings and said plurality of second coatings forming an outer shell on said cores about 0.1-0.5 mm in thickness and about 20-40% by weight of the final products;

drying said individual pieces of gum material in said second rotating drum member by circulation of air therein, said air being heated to a second temperature higher than the temperature of air in the first rotating drum member;

inclining said second rotating drum member a sufficient extent to insure that the first individual pieces of gum material introduced in the inlet end of said second rotating drum member are substantially the first ~~piece~~ pieces of gum material to be exhausted from the outlet end of said second rotating drum member;

wherein a smooth, thick shell of coating materials is formed on each of said pieces of gum material comparable to coatings formed by batch-type coating processes ~~and~~ but in a faster manner.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for continuously coating individual pieces of gum material to provide a smooth, thick shell of coating material thereon, comprising:

transferring the individual pieces of gum material into a first rotating drum member having an inlet end and an outlet end;

transporting the individual pieces of gum material from said inlet end to said outlet end;

applying ~~at least~~ a first ~~coating~~ plurality of coatings of a first material on said individual pieces of gum material in said first rotating drum member;

cooling the individual pieces of gum material in said first rotating drum member with air at a first temperature to prevent the individual pieces of gum material from sticking together;

inclining the first rotating drum member ~~with~~ to a sufficient extent to insure that the first individual pieces of gum material introduced into said inlet end are substantially the first pieces of gum material to be exhausted from the outlet end;

transferring the individual pieces of gum material to a second rotating drum member having an inlet end and an outlet end;

transporting said individual pieces of gum material from the inlet end to the outlet end of said second rotating drum member;

applying ~~at least~~ a second ~~coating~~ plurality of coatings of a second material on said individual pieces of gum material in said second rotating drum member;

said plurality of first coatings and said plurality of second coatings forming an outer shell on said cores about 0.1-0.5 mm in thickness and about 20-40% by weight of the final products;

drying said individual pieces of gum material in said second rotating drum member by circulation of air therein, said air being heated to a second temperature higher than the temperature of air in the first rotating drum member;

inclining said second rotating drum member a sufficient extent to insure that the first individual pieces of gum material introduced in the inlet end of said second rotating drum member are substantially the first ~~piece~~ pieces of gum material to be exhausted from the outlet end of said second rotating drum member;

wherein a smooth, thick shell of coating materials is formed on each of said pieces of gum material comparable to coatings formed by batch-type coating processes but in a faster manner.

15. (Currently Amended) A method for continuously coating cores of gum material to provide a smooth, thick shell of coating material thereon comprising:

(a) continuously introducing cores of gum material into an inlet end of a rotating drum member;

(b) transporting the cores of gum material from said inlet end to an outlet end of said drum member;

(c) applying a plurality of layers of a coating material on said cores of gum material inside said drum member until said layers of coating material form an outer shell on said cores about 0.1-0.5 mm in the thickness and about 20-40% by weight of the final products;

(d) drying ~~said coating~~ the coated cores of gum material by circulation of heated air inside said drum member; and

(e) inclining said drum member relative to the horizontal in order to insure that the first cores of gum material introduced into said inlet end of said rotating drum member are substantially the first cores of gum material to be exhausted from said outlet end of said drum member;

wherein a smooth, thick shell of coating materials is formed on each of said pieces of gum material comparable to coatings formed by batch-type coating processes, ~~and~~ but in a faster manner.

16. (New) The method as recited in claim 15 wherein said outer shell comprises about 30-35% by weight of the final products.

17. (New) The method as recited in claim 6 wherein said outer shell comprises about 30-35% by weight of the final products.

18. (New) The method as recited in claim 13 wherein said outer shell comprises about 30-35% by weight of the final products.

19. (New) The method as recited in claim 14 wherein said outer shell comprises about 30-35% by weight of the final products.